
15 Dangerous Apps Every Parent Should Know About

A Guide for Families from Our School Community

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Today's children are growing up in a connected world. More kids than ever have access to smartphones and tablets — and many are using them independently at younger and younger ages. While technology brings wonderful opportunities for learning and creativity, it also opens doors that we as parents need to be aware of. Many of the apps below look perfectly harmless — or even fun and educational at first glance. But under the surface, they can expose children to strangers, inappropriate or harmful content, and cyberbullying in ways that are not always obvious. Some are designed specifically to hide activity from parents.

This handout is meant to **inform**, not alarm. The goal is not to create fear, but to give our families the knowledge we need to have calm, open conversations with our children. When kids know they can come to us without fear of judgment or punishment, they are far more likely to do so. You know your child best — use this as a starting point for an ongoing, loving dialogue at home.

Apps to Be Aware Of

App Name	Why Parents Should Know About It
1. TikTok	This short video app is hugely popular with children and teens. Its built-in recommendation system can

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	quickly steer kids toward mature, violent, or otherwise inappropriate videos. Strangers are also able to comment on and privately message your child.
2. Snapchat	Photos and messages sent through this app disappear shortly after being viewed, which can give kids a false sense of security and encourage them to share things they otherwise wouldn't. The "Snap Map" feature can broadcast your child's exact location to their contacts — or to the public.
3. Instagram	This photo and video sharing platform is set to public by default, meaning strangers can see your child's posts and send them messages. Kids can be exposed to cyberbullying, harmful body-image content, and contact from unknown adults.
4. Discord	Originally built for video gamers, Discord lets users join group chat "servers" that are often completely unmoderated. These spaces can expose children to adult content, hate speech, and individuals with harmful intentions.
5. Roblox	Roblox looks like a child-friendly game, and many of its games are appropriate. However, it includes an open chat system where strangers can contact your child directly. Some user-made games within the platform contain violent or sexual content.
6. Kik	Unlike most messaging apps, Kik does not require a phone number to create an account. This makes it very easy for strangers — including predators — to create anonymous accounts and reach out to children with no way to trace who they are.
7. Omegle	This app randomly connects users —

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	including your child — with complete strangers via video or text chat. There is no age verification whatsoever. Exposure to explicit content and predatory adults is extremely common and well-documented.
8. Whisper	Whisper is an anonymous app where people post personal "secrets" for others to read and respond to. The content is often adult in nature, and the app can also share a user's general location, making it possible for strangers to know where your child is.
9. IMVU	IMVU is a virtual world where users create cartoon-like avatars and chat anonymously. Chat rooms are largely unmonitored, conversations frequently turn sexual in nature, and bullying between users is a known and ongoing problem.
10. Tumblr	This blogging and social media platform hosts a large and active community, but it also contains significant amounts of content that glorifies self-harm, eating disorders, and adult themes — even with content filters turned on.
11. Tinder	Tinder is an adult dating app that technically requires users to be 18 or older. However, children can easily bypass this by simply entering a false birth date. The app is designed to connect people for in-person meetings with strangers.
12. OkCupid	Similar to Tinder, OkCupid is an adult romantic matching app that a teenager can access by falsifying their age. It is focused on sexual and romantic pairing with strangers and is not appropriate for minors in any way.

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13. Chatspin	Chatspin connects users randomly with strangers around the world through live video chat. There is no age verification process, and users regularly report encounters with explicit content and inappropriate behavior from other users.
14. Hoop	Marketed as a way to "make new friends," Hoop uses a swipe-based system similar to Tinder to connect kids with strangers. It has very few safety protections in place and actively encourages contact between users who do not know each other.
15. Among Us	This popular multiplayer game is familiar to many families and can be fun in the right setting. However, it includes an open in-game chat feature that can put children in contact with unknown adults. The chat is not monitored and can easily be misused.

Simple Safety Tips for Parents

- 1. Keep the conversation open and calm.** Talk with your child about online safety in a relaxed way — not as a lecture, and not as a punishment. Children who feel safe talking to you are far less likely to hide what they're doing online.
- 2. Know what's on your child's device.** Make it a regular habit to sit down together and look at which apps are installed. Frame it as a "phone check-in," not a search — something you do as a team.
- 3. Charge devices in a common area overnight.** Keeping phones and tablets out of bedrooms at bedtime removes late-night temptation and helps

children get better sleep too.

4. **Turn on parental controls.** Both Apple (Screen Time) and Android (Google Family Link) have free, built-in tools that let you approve app downloads, set time limits, and filter content. Gaming consoles have similar settings worth exploring.

5. **Set social profiles to private.** Walk through your child's social media accounts together and make sure all profiles are set to private, so only approved followers can see their posts or contact them.

6. **Use family screen time tools.** Apps like Apple Screen Time, Google Family Link, or Bark can help you monitor usage, set healthy time limits, and receive alerts if concerning content is detected.

7. **Encourage your child to speak up.** Make sure your child knows that if anything online ever makes them feel uncomfortable, scared, or confused, they should come to you immediately — and that they will not be in trouble for doing so.

8. **Remind them: the internet has a long memory.** Help kids understand that anything posted, sent, or shared online — even things that "disappear" — can be saved, screenshotted, or forwarded. Once it's out there, it can be very hard to take back.

9. **Create a Family Technology Agreement.** Consider sitting down together as a family to write a simple set of rules everyone agrees to follow — including the parents. When kids help create the rules, they are much more likely to respect them.

10. **Model the behavior you want to see.** Be mindful of your own device habits. Children pay close attention to how adults around them use technology, and leading by example is one of the most powerful tools we have.

Questions? Talk to your child's teacher or school administrator. Together, we can keep our children safe.

For more resources, visit findmykids.org